

SELF-CARE

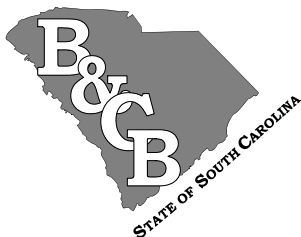
New Booklet Advises Taking an Active Role in Health Care Decisions

In connection with National Wise Health Consumer Month, in February, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) announced the availability of a new resource with practical tips on what people can do to improve the quality of the health care services they receive, including how to avoid medical errors. *Improving Health Care Quality: A Guide for Patients and Families* focuses on the key health care choices people typically make, such as choices about doctors, hospitals, and treatments, and stresses taking an active role in not only these decisions, but all of the decisions made about one's care.

Research has shown that people who are more actively involved in their care tend to get better results and feel more satisfied. Among the things that people should do:

- Work together with their doctor, nurse and any other health care providers in making decisions about their care.
- Ask questions and keep asking them until they understand the answers.
- Tell the doctor about all of the medicines they take.
- Don't assume that "no news is good news" when they take an x-ray or laboratory test. Ask the doctor or nurse about when and how they will receive the results.
- If surgery is needed, be sure that the patient, doctor and surgeon agree on what will be done.
- Know that "more is not always better." Be sure to find out why a test or treatment is necessary, and how it can help.
- When making health care choices, find and use information about quality measures.

This new publication is based on research about the information people want and need when deciding about their care. The material in the booklet is presented in an easy-to-read style, and it also describes other resources available on quality of care. **Copies are available free of charge by calling the AHRQ Publications Clearinghouse, 1-800-358-9295 or by writing to: AHRQ Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 8547, Silver Spring, MD, 20907. In addition, this guide can also be found on the AHRQ Web site by visiting <http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/qntrlite>.**



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